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Senate

The Senate met at 4 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Hear our prayer, O Lord. Rouse Your power and come. We stumble and fall without Your beacon of peace to guide us. As darkness seeks the upper hand with the Orlando massacre, shine Your light of hope upon our land. Despite the pain and horror of this tragedy, empower us to continue to trust in Your infinite mercy. Hear our prayers for those who died and for those who mourn. Bring healing to those who were injured.

Lord, give our lawmakers the wisdom to understand better the causes of violence which exists in our Nation and world. Use them to bring comfort, hope, and peace in the midst of insanity. Help us to remember the warning of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he said: "We must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or we will die together as fools."

We pray in Your sovereign Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 13, 2016.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable JONI ERNST, a Senator from the State of Iowa, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mrs. ERNST thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE ORLANDO ATTACK

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now observe a moment of silence for the victims of the Orlando attack.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senate will now observe a moment of silence for the victims of the Orlando attack.

(Moment of silence.)

The Senate majority leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, above this Capitol, the American flag flies at half-staff—a symbol of national sorrow for lives taken far too soon, a symbol of national solidarity for families left behind plunged into despair.

ISIL claims that the terrorist who committed this horrific act is one of the "soldiers of the caliphate." Our intelligence community will work to establish whether this terrorist was directed or inspired by ISIL. Either way, I will call him what he really is: a coward, a murderer who claimed allegiance to a brutal group that crucifies children and beheads women.

This terrorist sought to spread fear and sadness and suffering. Yet, even amidst the horror, he couldn't destroy our common bonds of humanity. Every act of compassion, every outstretched arm to a friend, every calming word to a stranger—a response to his cruel ideology and a reminder of who we are as Americans.

Let us recognize each act of heroism that night, and let us never forget the debts we owe to first responders—the men and women who rush toward danger and put their lives on the line for victims they never met.

Local law enforcement will continue working with the FBI to determine the exact nature of this crime. We will soon find out more details. We will learn, for instance, whether this attack was ISIL directed or inspired. Whether this terrorist was in communication with ISIL in Raqqa or simply following tactics set forth in Dabiq, ISIL's online magazine, it leads to a larger point. It is no longer an open, analytical question whether the followers of ISIL and other Islamic terrorist groups will attempt to strike us here in the West—they have, and they will continue to do so.

We need to do what we can to fight back so we can prevent more of these atrocities. That is exactly why, for instance, the Senate needs to be briefed on the President's counter-ISIL campaign. Understanding the President's plan with respect to ISIL is critical, especially given that the war in Iraq and Syria will outlive the life of his administration. That is why we have been asking the administration for briefings on his strategy for a very long time. I expect this will now happen very soon.

We will also be receiving a briefing on the Orlando attack this Wednesday, but today is a day for sorrow and remembrance. We saw the face of evil this weekend, and we stand shoulder to shoulder with fellow Americans this afternoon. We grieve for the victims, and we say this to their families and to

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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